DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 108 794 24 RC 008 599

TITLE	The Retriever, Volume 1, Number 1, Fall 1966. ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (CRESS), Newsletter.
INSTITUTION	New Mexico State Univ., University Park. ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.
SPONS AGENCY	National Center for Educational Research and Development (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
BUREAU NO	BR-6-2469
PUB DATE	66
CONTRACT	OEC-1-6-062469-1574
NOTE	5p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Clearinghouses; *Information Networks; Information Retrieval; *Newsletters; *Program Descriptions; Relevance (Education); Resource Centers; *Rural Education; *Search Strategies; Small Schools

ABSTRACT

The Educational Research Information Center (ERIC) is an educational information retrieval system. ERIC represents a decentralized, nationwide network of information Clearinghouses. Each Clearinghouse has its own area of subject specialization and retrieval responsibility, and is committed to acquiring, abstracting, indexing, storing, retrieving, and disseminating nationally the most significant educational research and relevant, useful documents pertaining to that area. One of these Clearinghouses is the Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (CRESS). CRESS is responsible for materials pertaining to rural education and/or small schools. This newsletter, a publication of CRESS focuses on the role CRESS plays in the ERIC system. Topics discussed are: the Clearinghouse's immediate goal, acquisition of documents, indexing, document storage, and dissemination. (PS)

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THE Retriever

ERIC
CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
RURAL EDUCATION AND SMALL SCHOOLS,
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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VOLUME I, Number 1 FALL 1966

ERIC, Who?

The advent of mass communication media has made knowledge more available than ever before. With a greater awareness of ever-increasing masses of knowledge, it becomes difficult to sift out and master the complex facts of one's vocational area. How can innovative ideas reach the practitioner of any profession while the ideas are fresh and applicable?

The field of education is attempting to breach this time lag with the establishment of ERIC--an educational information retrieval system. The Education Research Information Center represents a decentralized, nation-wide network of information Clearinghouses or research documentation centers, coordinated in the United States Office of Education. Each of these Clearinghouses has its own area of subject specialization and retrieval responsibility, and is committed to acquiring, abstracting, indexing, storing, retrieving, and disseminating nationally the most significant educational research and relevant, useful documents pertaining to that area. ERIC service will be available to the classroom teacher seeking answers to old situations, to the researcher seeking innovation, to the administrator with decisions to make, or to anyone concerned or interested in the welfare of American education.

CLEARINGHOUSE SCOPE

The concerns of this particular Clearinghouse are those rooted in rural education and/or small schools. The circumstances of rural life are particularly plastic today and are thus especially responsive to innovative ideas and practices.

Rural-related schools are those which are located within, or draw their students from, areas devoted to natural-resource utilization. This utilization may take the form of mining, farming, logging, ranching, oil drilling, isolation (as with certain government installations), water power for industry, resort areas, or other pursuits connected mainly with raw resources. Population density is not the deciding factor in determining rurality. The main criterion is that the people of the area depend more directly upon the land for sustenance. Since it happens that this kind of circumstance, with sparsity of population, has tended to produce small schools, it therefore follows that we are also responsible for information on the small school. Notable exceptions to smallness can be found in large consolidated schools which draw from rural areas.

RC008599

A UNIT OF THE NATIONAL ERIC SYSTEM SUPPORTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, OFFICE OF EDUCATION

APPLICATION

Our primary focus is with the child in a small school or rural-related setting. He comes to school as a product of his physical, social, economic, and decision-making environments. At school he is met with other physical, social, economic, and decision-making environments. We are concerned with the interaction of these environments set against the background of the child's innate being, capabilities, and experiencing. In dealing with a child of any given environment, what teaching methods, what curriculum, what materials, what building and equipment facilities, and what decisions must be chosen in order to prepare him to deal effectively with his world today and the world in which he might find himself tomorrow?

For example, what information (research reports, studies, theses, books, bibliographies, etc.) is available on the special problems of Indian education? What characteristics of the Indian environments make these problems special to Indians? Where rural areas are rapidly being engulfed by suburbia, how are the young people being prepared to meet a new way of life? How successful are rural consolidated schools in forging a sense of community awareness? Is the small school a vanishing part of Americana? How can student needs be met so that drop-outs do not occur? Are small schools financially feasible? Do the automated classrooms of American Samoa represent innovative practices which could be implemented in other classroom situations? In the face of continuing and spiraling Federal aid to public education, what is the role of local school boards? Are they losing control of their schools? What new textbooks are available for teaching children of bilingual backgrounds? How can school districts maximize their tax base? What problems are inherent in the mobility of migrant farm workers? Can states sharing migrant farm workers pool their resources to provide continuity and quality of education to migrant children? What constitutes an adequate school staff? How can small schools and rural areas compete with pay scales of schools in metropolitan areas? Is it more feasible for a school district to own its school buses or to contract out for services?

These questions indicate just a few representative areas of our storage-retrieval responsibility. All states or possessions of the United States have elements of rural-related schools, small schools, or both. The mobility of our population implies that rural-oriented students move to metropolitan areas, carrying with them their environmental heritages. Even metropolitan areas, then, should be aware of the effects of rurality on immigrants.

IMMEDIATE GOAL

This Clearinghouse must acquire every piece of information which might be of value in the rural or small school situation. We cannot begin to answer inquiries until we have a substantial library of information stored. Our immediate goal, then, is acquisition. Although acquisition identifications will become increasingly specific in future months, initial emphasis is on the following broad areas:

A. Education views, experiences, and research with particular relevance to, and usefulness in, the rural or small school setting

B. Ethnic, cultural, social, or economic information foundational to understanding and identifying needs in rural schooling

C. Indian education

D. Education of agricultural migrants

E. Territorial schools

If you have done any research which might be pertinent, or if you know of documents which you feel should be stored in the system, please send us two copies of the documents or indicate where we might obtain them.

Documents and/or names for the mailing list should be sent to:

ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and
Small Schools
New Mexico State University
Box AP
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001

Please remember to include your name, return address, and zip code numbers.

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THE STORAGE BIN

The basic objective of any information retrieval system is to provide reliable information rapidly and at a minimum cost of time and effort to the user. A major specific objective is to facilitate the availability of research results, some of which have not been published or are awaiting publication (a delay which can make results obsolete even before they are published).

Collecting documents will be a continuing effort. The documents will be stored according to key concept words called descriptors (see A ROSE IS A ROSE). These descriptors are being chosen from words in professional usage, and the list (or thesaurus) of them will be continually revised as new word usage evolves.

Ease and accuracy of retrieval is a system goal. It is anticipated that we can begin some manual retrieval early in 1967, and will be partially automated by late spring. A request for information will be identified by its descriptors, and a search will be made for all documents containing those particular key concept words. Initially, it is anticipated that document identification and abstracts will be provided to the user. Much effort will be spent to ensure speedy processing of requests. It must be kept in mind, however, that the system will be new and untried. Ultimately there will be a capability for providing micro-fiche or hard copies of requested material.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the system will be on-going to assure service of the highest quality. This evaluation will be solicited from users, since only they can measure the timely usefulness of the information received.

Further articles will appear in THE RETRIEVER as knowledge and sophistication are gained in the technical aspects of the establishment and use of the storage and retrieval system. Perhaps we can develop a mutuality of interest with others involved in the storage and retrieval of information.

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A ROSE IS A ROSE

Is a rose by any other name still as sweet? How can one speak of a specific rose and other rose fanciers immediately visualize the particular rose? This is possible because varieties of roses have become conceptualized with characteristics which are descriptive of the individual varieties. We can, for example, assume the concept that a Peace rose will have a certain coloration, shape, and its bloom will likely appear on a long stem.

Education, too, comes in many guises. Jargon often adds confusion. In order, therefore, that relevancy can be maintained in inquiries to and replies from ERIC Clearinghouses, descriptive words, or descriptors, have been assigned to key concepts in education. The word "bilingualism," for example, not only carries language connotations, but used in the education conceptualization carries with it attendant reading, speech, and other adjustments on the part of the bilingual student, his teachers, and the school system.

It would be helpful to us (and ultimately to the user) if requests for information from the Clearinghouse could be couched in specific terms. A request for all references on "bilingualism" might result in an avalanche of materials, perhaps many of them unusable for that particular user. However, a request for information concerning pronunciation lists for the elementary bilingual child, or a request for a bibliography of supplemental reading materials for bilingual students grades 1-3 might save

readily pinpoint the precise information required by the user.

In order, therefore, that we can more expeditiously handle inquiries, think BIG in terms of the educational concept involved, and then state precisely which element of that concept is involved in the inquiry. We can then more readily retrieve relevant material for your use.

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THE RECOUNT

As we progress with the acquisition and storage of documents, this space will carry bits of information such as new publications received, occasionally an abstract or two, questions whose answers may be of general interest, brief bibliographies, or perhaps something the readers may specifically request.

While no individual issue of THE RETRIEVER will attempt to report the entire range of the Center's activities, it should be noted that we are currently compiling various lists relevant to our areas of responsibility. These lists include projects, funding agencies, medical centers, service agencies, public school system research directors, names and personnel of private and public research agencies, educational associations, and institutes or centers dealing with the educational, psychological, or sociological aspects of small schools and rural education.

It is rumored that some of these lists are already available. If so, their source is as elusive as the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

If you know of any such listings, or would like to contribute items for our inclusion, please send the information to us. We will appreciate your interest in aiding the cause!

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THE MASTHEAD

THE RETRIEVER masthead was illustrated by M. Stephanie Osterlitz, a junior Art major at New Mexico State University.

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THE RETRIEVER is a publication of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. The Clearinghouse is located at New Mexico State University, P. O. Box AP, Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001.
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